

1 **ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION**

2 A quilting apparatus and method for guiding a sewing machine relative to at least
3 one layer of fabric is disclosed. The apparatus may include an adjustable quilting frame
4 and a carriage assembly that supports the sewing machine. The quilting frame is
5 mounted relative to a working surface and retains one or more fabric layers in a
6 substantially planar orientation. The carriage assembly includes lower and upper carriage
7 components that cooperate to transport the sewing machine in lateral and longitudinal
8 directions with respect to the quilting frame. The quilting frame includes support
9 members acting as spools to retain the fabric layers and having locking mechanisms for
10 maintaining tension in the fabric layers. The support members have an adjustable length
11 to accommodate various fabric sizes and to accommodate the arbitrary dimensions of the
12 working surface. The height of the quilting frame may also be adjusted by a height
13 adjustment assembly.

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MADSON & METCALF, P.C.
ATTORNEYS AT LAW
900 GATEWAY TOWER WEST
15 WEST SOUTH TEMPLE
SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH 84101